

Teaching English through Mass Communication Media: A Case Study of Under Graduate Students in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

All over the world today, the mass media plays very important role in our daily life such as political, economic, educational, and social, and communication of information technology. Generally, learning and teaching foreign language use course work books, however, in these modern era, using internet, newspaper, the radio, or TV also become a kind of typical English teaching methods. We can see three types of the most important mass media, i.e., radio, television and film. These three media can create to teach and learn the most effective method. They have become major industries catering to vast audiences throughout the world. They enable teachers to meet various needs and interests of their students. They also provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using communication tools. They entertain students and encourage reading English and promoting extensive reading by giving the students the confidence, the motivation and the ability to continue their reading outside the classroom. Mass communication contributes a lots to the teachers and students such as creative though and practical ideas. The mass communication can make people to get the latest information and the knowledge of different aspects of view in education in more attractive way to the students. Henceforth, a classroom teacher necessary to bring mass communication media in the classroom, at last, a laptop to use internet, power-point, or audiovisual instruction. The use of mass communication media, it can be changed the teaching strategies and makes more student's interests to learn English. Having known the education importance of the mass communication media, the researcher would like to propose to make in depth study of the relationship between the mass communications and educational performance of learning English with special focus on the college and university students under graduate level in Thailand.

Keywords

Mass communication media, Strategies, Educational Performance, Technology, and Effective Teaching Method.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, all student needs critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. These are basic skills and fundamental requirement for the under graduate students. In our country, academic performance is generally judge through periodical examination system. Under graduate level is four years altogether and covers all courses works attendance, assignments, presentation of individual or groups, middle term exam and final exam. The extracurricular activities have assumed importance and preference in this filed are also being considered along with academic performance. Technology is becoming an integral part of any modern classroom. As a teacher, it is important that you can recognize and understand the usefulness of various types of technology you might find in your classroom. In the past, when a teacher want to show something to the whole class, probably, he or she had to draw or write on a blackboard or whiteboard to use on an overhead projector. Information technology contributes to a change in the learning environment to improve the functionality of the learning experience. With the help of developing technology, the mass communication media is emerged broadly around us. In this educational technology, the term technology refers to any devices which can apply in the class-room, such as radio, TV, computers, tablets, mobiles, interactive whiteboard, etc.

Therefore, L. William Rivers states in his work of 'Mass media and Modern Society', thus "The electronic media: movies, radio, television have histories differing sharply in some respects from those of the printed media. Products of the industrial and technological revolution, the electronic media first appeared when the democratic movement was full-blown and when urbanization had brought together multitudes whom they could address simultaneously. For those reasons the electronic media were democratized from the start and have always appealed to popular rather than to class audiences. Unlike the printed media they require that their viewers or listeners attend to them in a single body; indeed, one characteristic of either radio or television is instantaneous transmission. For instance, we can pick up a copy of book that has lain undisturbed on a library shelf for the past ten years and read it in utter solitude. But if we switch on the televisionset too late, our favorite program is gone forever, and the millions

who viewed it have become occupied with something else. Soon, however, the home video tape will change all this." (L. William, 1971)¹

2. Definition of Mass Communication and Media

Education, in Thailand, has been effectively developed because most of the Educators and learners are well exposed to the use of mass media facilities in teaching and learning activities. Not only that but also the Media facilities are available in some secondary schools, colleges and universities because the Government makes the development of under graduate level education in terms of distributing materials and supportive mass media facilities. Before going into depth research, let us look at the definition of the term 'mass media'.

According to Collins English dictionary, mass media is the means of communications that reach large numbers of people in a short time, such as television, newspapers, magazine and computer. Therefore mass media is the technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication. These media technologies include radio, recorded music, film, newspaper, computer and television.

Mass media (broadly defined in a way which does not specify the audience's precise characteristics) are all the impersonal means of communication by which visual and/or auditory messages are, transmitted directly to audiences. Included among the mass media are television, radio, motion picture, newspaper, magazines, books and bill boards. It must be kept in mind however that there are variations among the mass media and that radio, motion picture, television and popular press are likely to have a longer and more heterogeneous audiences" (Gould and Kolf, 1964p-227).

Thailand tends to treat mass media facilities as not separate instruments in facilitating of teaching and learning activities, and some extent teachers have been using media facilities in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The researcher, henceforth, is interested to find out the role of mass media on academic performance of colleges and universities students. This small paper is conducted in Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University. It will be covered the role of mass media on academic performance of under graduate level students. In this regard, firstly, the researcher would like to explore the general concept of mass communication media.

"The term mass communication has sometimes been defined in two ways: communication by the media and communication for the masses. Mass communication, however, does not mean communication for everyone. The media tend to select their audiences; audiences likewise select among and within the media" (Rivers, 1971 p-16).²

Voelker and Ludmila gave their comment that the mass media are important forces in our society. They provide information and entertainment, and at the same time possess persuasive powers which have proved capable of effecting radical changes. They do more than present ideas though; each medium also uniquely shapes what it presents (Ludmila, 1972).³

In accordance with Larsen, mass communication is synonymous to mass media. "Defined in general terms, mass communication refers to the relatively simultaneous exposure of a large, scattered and heterogeneous audience to stimuli transmitted by impersonal means from an organized source for whom the audience members are anonymous. Sociological interest penetrates this phenomenon at several points. The greatest concern is directed toward the social effects of mass communication. This means examining how consumers use and respond to mass media material (Larsen, 1968).

UNESCO has conducted a survey conclusively that radio and television have made significant contributions to the cause of education in many countries, developed as well as developing. It was found that the programmes through these mass media have enriched the knowledge of the students and widened their horizons. Many countries have also launched programmes of adult literacy on television (Chanda, 1966).

As a common definition, we can find some of concept by the Sills's in his editorial work, mass media are those that attract people over a broad range of intellectual or cultural levels. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to characterize as mass media all media that use techniques making for a loss of direct personal communication between the communicator and his public. This would include all printed publications, including some with highly restricted publics; hard cover books, little magazines, the specialized organs of voluntary associations, corporations, trade unions and other groups. Under the same heading 'art films', educational television, phonograph recordings, FM radio, and other audio visual media with limited appeal would have to be considered mass media, in contrast to the plastic and live performing arts, even though all of these are a part of elite culture (Sills. L. David, 1968)

3. Teaching Language By Means of Mass Communication Media

Language plays very important role of a catalyst in the progress of human civilization. Language has been the basic tool of human communication which relates the individual to the social environment. Communication is mainly an oral-aural process and visual communication remained restricted to expressive dance and pictures carved in stone. The existence of a language depends on whether the particular language is still alive or not as a spoken form. By the time of writing began, visual communication starts to gain more importance. It shifted from oral-aural to the visual or from the ear to the eye. Henceforth, Williams said "writing had made possible the recording of communication: printing made possible its rapid distribution, and the history of communications from 17th century until our own century is largely the history of the Press".

Various types of the media have always created an indispensable part of the language teaching classrooms, because they bring the authentic elements into the lessons. These elements help the students to get closer to the real-life situations and make the learning of English more genuine and lively. Additionally, in the communicative language teaching, authenticity is a very important feature of the lessons as the use of authentic objects and materials in the English language classrooms. It is promoted by this method. Therefore, the English teachers are presupposed to use a variety of media in their classrooms.

1 L. William, Rivers. "The Mass Media and Modern Society", San Francisco: Rinehart Press. 1971. p. 16.

2 L. William, Rivers. 1971. Op. Cit. p. 16.

3 Voelker Francis and Ludmila, (1972). "Mass Media Forces in our Society", New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. p. 1.

In this regard, media can be divided into two: old media and new media. The old media are traditionally counted the printed media such as books, newspapers or magazines and the electronic media such as radio, tapes and records, television and films. The use of the old media in the English language classrooms brings positive motivation, interactivity and collaboration into the lessons. It can be achieved through activities such as analyzing a text on a popular topic in a magazine, watching and discussing a teenage film or a short video or reconstructing a book story in pairs or groups. Such activities provide students not only with the language practice, but also with information. Since most of the students are familiar with these types of media, the activities done at school can be easily extended and continued or finished at home, which may help the students to bring English into their daily lives. However, the teacher should consider the side-effect of media. Linguistic scholars, Tanriverdi and Apak gave a remark on this case, "teacher must be aware that newspapers and magazines are commercial enterprises aimed at a particular target readership; and as such they may reflect the values, interests and biases of the readership; as well as those of the owners, editorial staff, and the political milieu".

New media are forms of media that are native to computers, computational and relying on computers for redistribution. Some examples of new media are telephones, computers, virtual worlds, single media, website games, human-computer interface, computer animation and interactive computer installations (Manovich, 2003).⁴ The new media open up new possibilities of working with the tasks, e.g. they can help the English teachers to support the student-centered, the collaborative or the problem-based learning. Regarding to new media, there might be came out a question which types of the new media can be used in the college and university classroom. In this modern era, whenever we talk about the new media in the language teaching, our mind usually go into our own portable device, i.e. laptops, tablets, and mobiles with the wireless Internet access.

4. The Use of Laptop in the Classroom

In this 21st century, using laptop in the classroom is very popular in Thailand. It is very useful to access the Internet for the English teaching and learning to be a reality. For example, when the teachers support to use laptop their students in working with information on the Internet, students may come up to the tendency of moving away from the individualized learning to the so called networked teaching by using laptop. On the other hand, it can be so called 'networking teaching method'. It is built upon the premise that students are increasingly used to sharing and editing information or correction oneself and the others. The networked learning can create a basis for a good communicative environment in which the four key competences of the 21st century learners, i.e. critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity can be developed (Bannister & Wilden).

5. Intergradation with Mass communication media and Teaching Method

In Thailand, the most popular device for the educational performance is laptop, and projectors. The researcher, therefore, would like to integrate with English teaching method and new mass media.

Before going to teach English, the teachers think of the foreign language teaching method at the colleges and universities. At least, they probably consider the two aspects: first are the means of motivation of their students and the effectiveness of the teaching process. The latter is predominantly connected with the needs of the society in which they live. The aspect of motivation is directly related to the needs of the students. Considering both in relation to the media use in the 21st century English classrooms, it is necessary to find the answers on the subsequent questions: Is it enough to use the old media in the classrooms? Which media do the teachers generally prefer and do they feel confident in using the new media?

In this case, the researcher would like to answer the above two question. First of all, the scope of my research field are one college and one university. They are Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. I teach English in both universities.

The first question, is it enough to use the old media in the classrooms? The answer for this question is 'no'. Because, in this modern era, the teachers and students, they do not want to bring radio, or TV. Instead of audio-visual teaching and learning, they may use some of printed media, such as handout, podcaster. For the second question in above, teachers are more prefer to use new media, such as laptop, projector, and Internet access.

As the researcher is a teacher of English four skill, we have to use simulative English teaching method to persuade of student's interests for learning. Thailand is now developing country and we have contact with many foreign countries. Henceforth, it is an important to know how teachers teach and how students learn a foreign language. English is a worldwide used language. Generally, it can be divided into two teaching method for a beginner: simulative teaching and associative teaching (Cole, 1949).⁵ The language teaching is a topic under the Applied Linguistics. English is set up as a secondary language in the colleges and universities in Thailand.

The history of language teaching has been characterized by a search for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages. More than a hundred years, debate and discussion within the teaching profession have often centered on issues such as the role of grammar in the language curriculum, the development of accuracy and fluency in teaching, the choice of syllabus frameworks in course design, the role of vocabulary in language learning, teaching productive and receptive skills, learning theories and their application in teaching, memorization and learning, motivating learners, effective learning strategies, techniques for teaching the four skills, and the role of materials and technology. Although much has been done to clarify these and other important questions in language teaching, the teaching profession is continually exploring new options for addressing these and other basic issues and the effectiveness of different instructional strategies and methods in the classroom.

A teaching method comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and efficient it has to be in relation with the characteristic of the learner and the type of learning it is supposed to bring about. Suggestions are there to design and selection of teaching methods must take into account not only the nature of the subject matter but also how students learn (Westwood, 2008). In this regard, there can be listed the effective methods for teaching English at

⁴Manovich, Lev. "New Media From Borges to HTML." The New Media Reader. Ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003. pp. 13-25.

⁵ Percival R. Cole, the Method and Technique of Teaching, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1949, p. 1.

the colleges and university level. They are: 1). Lecture method, 2). Group discussion, 3). Individual presentation, 4). Assignment, 5). Brain storming, 6). Role play, and 7). Case study.

Lecture Method: A lecture is a types of verbal presentation given by a lecturer, trainer or speaker to an audience. With all the advancement of training systems and computer technology, lecture method is still a backbone widely used in teaching and training as educational performance. This method can be used for a large number of students, material can be covered in a structured manner and the teacher has a great control of time and material. Kochkar said that with planning and effective presentation techniques, the lecture can be a highly effective and interactive method for transferring knowledge to students. Lecture gives the pupils training in listening and taking rapid notes (Kochkar, 2000).

Discussion: It is a free verbal exchange of ideas between group members or teacher and students. For effective discussion the students should have prior knowledge and information about the topic to be discussed. McCarthy, P. (1992) stated strengths of class discussion as; pools ideas and experiences from group, and allows everyone to participate in an active process. Kochkar stated that; a problem, an issue, a situation in which there is a difference of opinion, is suitable for discussion method of teaching. Our study also revealed that the students rated group discussion (class discussion) as the second best method by giving reasons that; it has more participation of students, the learning is more effective, the students don't have to rely on rote learning, every student give his or her opinion, and this method develops creativity among students.

Individual Presentation: Presentations are a great way to have students practice all language systems areas (vocabulary, grammar, discourse and phonology) and skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). They also build confidence, and presenting is a skill that most people will need in the world of work. I find that students who are good presenters are better communicators all round, since they are able to structure and express their ideas clearly. Presentation skills are extremely useful both in and outside the classroom. After completing a project, a presentation is a channel for students to share with others what they have learned. It is also a chance to challenge and expand on their understanding of the topic by having others ask questions. And in the world of work, a confident presenter is able to inform and persuade colleagues effectively.

Assignment method: Written assignments help in organization of knowledge, assimilation of facts and better preparation of examinations. It emphasizes on individual pupil work and the method that helps both teaching and learning processes (Kochkar, 2000, p.358). Theall, M. (n.d.) mentioned that the students can answer questions about the quality of lectures, the value of readings and assignments, and the clarity of the instructor's explanations. Students are certainly qualified to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience. They have a right to express their opinions in any case, and no one else can report the extent to which the experience was useful, productive, informative, satisfying, or worthwhile.

Brainstorming: It is a loosely structured form of discussion for generating ideas without participants embroiled in unproductive analysis. It is a very useful technique for problem solving, decision making, creative thinking and team building. It develops listening skills.

Role Play: Role play occurs when participants take on differentiated roles in a simulation. These may be highly prescribed, including biographical details, and even personality, attitudes and beliefs; or loosely indicated by an outline of the function or task. These techniques have already demonstrated their applicability to a wide range of learners, subjects and levels. (Singh, and Sudarshan, 2005, p 238, 239). It is a memorable and enjoyable learning method. To gain maxim benefits from this method, the incidents selected for enactment should be as realistic as the situation allows.

Case Study: Primarily developed in business and law contexts, case method teaching can be productively used in liberal arts, engineering, and education. This method is basically used to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as to present students with real-life situations.

However, at the present, teachers of English prefer some form of communicative teaching and learning, rather than the audio-lingual method and its derivatives. However, we must remember that a successful English teacher is not necessarily biased in favor of one method or another. First of all, the teacher should be competent in and comfortable with the methods he wants to use. The teacher tends to select different teaching strategies from different methods, and blends them to suit the needs of his materials and students. It is important that the students are given extensive opportunities to practice English in the class as well as outside the classroom, even as it is important for them to have time and freedom to digest, reflect and analyze what has been exposed to them. Looking at the list of methods in above shows that they are ample in number. Then why teachers are not able to secure desired outcome in the classrooms is the basic question that arises. Teaching a language is a difficult task. English teacher should adopt an effective strategy of teaching so that to make the time and effort worthwhile.

Mass communication media, no matter what old or new media plays vital role in improving teaching and learning English language, such radio, TV series, magazines, newspaper, laptop, internet, social media, or any new electronic device. For instance, listening songs are the best way to communicate how to use a language to express our feelings. Movies are a very common past time but apart from that most of the times they are also very instructional and educational. This method appeals to the students as most of the times they are able to connect with the songs and the movies which help them understand the meaning of expressions, usage of tools of the language like comparisons, personifications etc. These sources help them understand why such tools are necessary and also help them understand their usage. The use of mass communication method is very effective in teaching the language. Traditional methods of reading newspapers and books, novels are also very good methods to teach the language. When the traditional methods are modified along with some innovative ideas the entire learning and the teaching process is enriched and guarantees a success in efficient learning. These are the innovative and creative ways of teaching the English Language.

6. Conclusion.

As a conclusion of this small paper, we can assume up that the relationship between exposure of the students to mass media and their academic performance. Mass media enables the students to augment their knowledge in the field of general knowledge, speaking and writing capacity. Language is the culture of the people who speak it. It is the verbal expression of culture. Language teaching becomes relevant, if it is presented in its cultural setting, and it becomes more real and alive through the new mass

communication media than through a mere textbook, radio or television. The essence of this small article is a survey of questionnaires with teachers and students in two institutions: In the Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University some of the teachers are not comfortable with the use of mass communication media, and they do not use the available technical resources within the classroom. It is about 25% of teachers. However, 75% of English teachers accept that they have the technical aids of electronic devices. 100 percent of students agree with learning English with a communicative method by using mass communication media. There is no rejection of the fact that English is the global and the language of opportunities. However, in the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, the students want to use English, but they cannot correctly use English because of some reasons, such as 'hesitation', and 'lack of vocabulary'. It is noted that the students are not habitual of writing English in daily life, except text message (40%), notes (20%), and emails (10%). Mostly they use Thai language while writing something. The most difficulties, while using English for the students were selected as a particular area. They are: a) while reading magazine and other books, b) in listening comprehension, c) lack of vocabulary, d) while having conversation with foreigners, and e) while pronouncing English vocabulary, especially, 'r' and 'l', 'w' and 'v' are always difficult to pronounce in normal Thai students, except who went to special classes or extra class outside of classroom. The student's responses in expressing innovative ideas for the improvement of English classroom. Their opinion is that the classroom should have and use more mass communication media tools to facilitate the teaching of English and the teaching method should be made more interesting.

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